



# Cochise Health & Social Services

Mary Gomez, Director

"Building A Healthier Future"

\*\*\* MEDIA RELEASE \*\*\*

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**Date:** July 28, 2014

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: West Nile Virus May Re-Appear With Monsoon Rains

### What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne virus that was first detected in the United States in 1999 and Arizona in 2003. The majority of people and animals that are infected with the virus have a mild illness or no symptoms. In rare cases, the virus can cause a more serious condition called encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain. The elderly are at a higher risk for disease caused by West Nile virus.

According to the Arizona Department of Health Services, as of 7/12/14 a total of five probable and confirmed human cases of West Nile virus had been reported in Arizona this year. This number is down from eight cases reported at the same time last year. Of these cases, none were in Cochise County. Unfortunately, one case in Maricopa County resulted in the death of a gentleman in his early 60s with underlying health issues.

The disease most often affects birds, horses, and humans. Importantly, human-to-human transmission does not occur. The virus is most prevalent from July through October when mosquitoes are most abundant.

Cochise Health and Social Services (CHSS) works with the Arizona Department of Health Services to track human and horse encephalitis cases, including those caused by West Nile virus. The Environmental Health Services Division of CHSS monitors the abundance and type of mosquitoes in Cochise County by regular testing of mosquito pools, and this testing will continue until mosquito season ends in October. No pools have tested positive in Cochise County so far this year.

### Who is at Risk and How to Prevent West Nile Virus

There is currently no specific treatment for West Nile virus and no human vaccine to prevent it. Eighty percent of people who are infected with West Nile virus develop no or few symptoms, while 20 percent develop mild symptoms such as headache, body aches, fever greater than 100.4 degrees, mild skin rash, nausea, and swollen lymph glands. Less than 1 percent will develop neurological illnesses, such as encephalitis or meningitis, and may develop paralysis or cognitive difficulties that can last for years, if not for life.

People older than 50 and those with certain medical conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease and organ transplants, are at greater risk for serious illness. Although most people with mild cases of West Nile virus will recover on their own, anyone who develops symptoms should call their doctor.

\*\*\* more \*\*\*

Public Programs, Personal Service: [www.cochise.az.gov](http://www.cochise.az.gov)

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The best way to protect yourself from West Nile virus is to avoid getting bitten by mosquitoes. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend the following preventive steps:

- Avoid outside activity at dawn and dusk during mosquito season (July through October in Cochise County)
- Use DEET-based insect repellents when outdoors
- Wear light-weight long sleeves and pants when outdoors
- Don't leave standing water outside in open containers, such as flowerpots, buckets and kiddie pools
- Ensure that swimming pools and decorative water features are properly maintained
- Install or repair window and door screens
- Use air conditioning when possible
- If you own horses, consider vaccinating them against West Nile Virus

## About Cochise Health and Social Services

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, Cochise Health and Social Services promotes health and quality of life for all Cochise County residents through education, service, and leadership. For more information, including recent media releases, please visit our website at <http://cochise.az.gov/health>.

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